



Shifting the Sands of Time: moving an archive

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Introduction

This paper describes the process of relocating an archival collection from an old building to a new one. For the most part, it is based on experiences learned within Australia—as well as Australian practices and climatic conditions—but the major points can apply equally in any country. The emphasis is on issues involved before, during and, to a lesser extent, after the move. It is about neither choosing a site for new premises nor designing the layout. It assumes that was done long ago. It is also assumed that one or more members of staff have been appointed as the project supervisor or team, to plan and co-ordinate the move, and it is for them that this paper is written. When selecting such people a point to note is that ideal members are not necessarily those with good organisational skills, but those that have a good understanding of all the business functions of the organisation concerned.¹

Lastly, it makes little difference whether the move involves multi-storey buildings or single-storey ones. It makes little difference whether a professional removal firm has been engaged to do the work or, because the organisation is a small one, the work will be done in-house. The most important thing to remember is that all records must be delivered safely to the new building as quickly as possible, placed on the shelving in a predetermined order, and made readily accessible to staff and readers.

1. The role of the project supervisor

The role of the project supervisor should never be underestimated. This person must perform a number of functions that are critical for a successful move. The most significant of these involve communications and planning. The supervisor is the go-between for management, staff, unions, readers, the removal firm and the managers of both the old and new buildings.

While the new building is under construction or refurbishment, the project supervisor should be actively planning for the move, even if it is months away. All staff should be briefed, consulted over their particular work areas and given the chance actually to see their new work areas well before the move takes place.

If a removal firm is to be used, it will be the supervisor's task to select that firm, liaise with its staff and train them in the handling of archival material. The supervisor

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will also need to ensure that his or her own organisation's staff are familiar with the packing techniques and labelling systems used by the removal firm.

The supervisor will need to establish in what order records, staff and their effects will be moved and when the move will actually take place. If the move is likely to be an extended one a priority schedule should be established. A plan illustrating how the records will be located in the new building needs to be developed. An action plan should be drafted with targets, milestones and responsibilities for each action clearly shown. The plan should be discussed with everyone and finalised after any outstanding issues have been resolved. It is also suggested that the supervisor should produce a regular news bulletin so that staff, readers and other clients know what is happening. This does not have to be elaborate. A short note distributed to staff, placed on notice-boards throughout the building and posted on the website, if available, should suffice. The bulletin can be used as the vehicle for reporting on any subsequent delays that might occur.

1.1. Timing of the Move

The precise timing of the move must be determined at an early stage. It needs to be decided whether the move will take place during business hours, at night, or at weekends. Each organisation also needs to resolve whether its move will proceed on a continuous basis until it has been completed, or if it will be done in stages, say every night or every weekend.

Moving during business hours is certainly cheaper and quicker for both the organisation and the removal firm, as it does not involve higher wages. But if the new building is on the other side of town and heavy cross-city traffic has to be negotiated, the move could take longer than if undertaken outside business hours. Furthermore, if the move takes place at night or at weekends it may also be possible to provide readers with limited access to the collection during the day.

1.2. Accessing the Collection during the Move

In addition to the timing of the move, a second major issue is whether the reading room will be closed and readers denied access to the collection. If this is the case then readers must be notified well in advance and it is desirable that the move takes place as quickly as possible in order to reduce the time that access is denied.² Restricted access may also shape relocation priorities in that those records subject to high demand should be moved first to reduce the time they are withheld from use.

However, it should be remembered that even though an organisation might have every intention of restricting access to the collection, there is always the possibility that an item might have to be retrieved urgently—say for a court case or compensation claim. Whether this request is managed with ease or difficulty is greatly dependent on the level of control established beforehand. Full and accurate listings of where records are located at any given time during the move will certainly help in this regard.

2. Planning the move

The first, and most important, step in the moving process is planning and as much time as possible should be allowed for this. There are a number of tasks that have to

be undertaken well before the move occurs. There are also many key decisions that must be made early in the process.

2.1. Stocktaking the Collection—key outcomes

A full stocktake of the collection should be completed, shelf by shelf and box by box. The aim of the stocktake is to determine the full extent of the collection, what will be taken to the new building and precisely where it is located now. There needs to be a thorough familiarisation with the collection if this does not exist already. If the present building has been occupied for many years it is not unusual to find that what is on the shelves will not match inventories. Boxes and other items will have been added or moved.

The stocktake will provide firm estimates of the quantity of records—in metres, boxes or bundles—that will be moved. It should also indicate the special needs that some records might have during the packaging and transportation phases. There may be bulky or fragile items—plans, models, films, glass plate negatives, seals or parchments. There may be particularly heavy items, or there may be very large items that simply will not fit on standard shelving. There may be consignments of large volumes that are stored flat because there has never been sufficient space to place them upright. In such cases, non-standard shelving might have to be acquired. Now is the time to be aware of these needs.

The stocktake will also help determine which records will be moved first. Priorities should include those that have the highest usage in the reading room (as already indicated), those that are the most fragile, those that require strict environmental storage conditions, or those that are the most sensitive from a security perspective. They should all be relocated as quickly as possible. A thorough familiarisation with the collection will help to determine the precise placement of records in the new building (which will be discussed in more detail shortly).

It will probably be the case that during the stocktake some items will be on loan. They could have been issued to the reading room, be undergoing examination prior to public release, or be receiving conservation treatment. It is desirable that all items are returned but this is not always practical, so space should be allowed for their return at a later date. ‘Dummy’ boxes can of course be inserted in their place, to be substituted when the originals are returned.

As part of the stocktake it should be ascertained if there are any records which are—or soon will be—due for destruction. If so, they should be kept separate from the remainder.

2.2. Preparing the Collection for the Move

While a removal firm may be used to undertake the move, as a general rule what it does is relocate the records—it does not prepare the collection prior to the move. There are a number of issues that need to be considered in this context.

2.2.1. Reboxing. Assuming the budget will allow it, a move is an ideal time to rebox the collection into archival quality (acid-free) containers and packaging materials. But note that more than likely it will be found that boxes have been overpacked and as they are reboxed and ‘thinned out’ the size of the collection will increase. Regardless of whether reboxing takes place or not, all items should be boxed or wrapped and not

transported loose.³ For the most part, archival quality containers are not as strong as the older boxes they have replaced, ie those made from recycled materials. If repackaging does take place the boxes need to be handled carefully. When they are placed in trolleys or cages they should be stacked on individual shelves and not just on top of each other. At the very least, if they must be stacked on top of each other, thick cardboard sheeting should be used to form separate layers and help cushion the weight.

2.2.2. Barcoding. Some organisations use the opportunity provided by a move to number all the boxes in their collection in a single sequence. It does make for easier control but, in truth, is only really useful if there is some doubt concerning the removal firm's ability to maintain the original order. If there are accurate listings of all records—consignment numbers and boxes—there is simply no need to develop an additional numbering system. However, if boxes are to be numbered, it provides the opportunity to consider barcoding the collection. Barcoding can be undertaken on a number of levels—enabling basic control during the move, or assisting with accessibility long after the move. Regardless of which option is chosen, considerable time is needed to plan and institute the system.

One level of barcoding is simply to ensure control during the move. Each box or bundle can be barcoded as it is placed on a trolley. The trolleys can be barcoded as they are loaded onto a vehicle and even the vehicle can be barcoded. In essence, what is being developed is a system akin to a Russian doll, enabling multiple layers of control at all stages of the move. If a box is missing it will be known in an instant where it was last located. The data thus collected can be scanned into the organisation's computerised management system, which can allow for greater control in the future. If the collection is being reboxed it is also possible, with a little extra effort, to barcode every item at the same time. In this way another control system can be developed which allows an organisation to regulate and monitor access to items once they are permanently located within the new building. Barcode labels can be applied by hand (simply by peeling from a roll), or by hand-held or automatic applicators. The latter involves boxes being placed on a conveyor belt and labelled as they pass the applicator. All the equipment needed can be purchased or hired.

If a barcoding system is to be adopted, regardless of the purpose, careful consideration of the software is needed to ensure it is compatible with that used by removal firms, warehouses and other organisations. There are many examples on the market but the most common are those that conform to Code 39 or Code 128.⁴ These two codes are widely used in commerce and industry, so they offer significant benefits in terms of availability, ease of use and flexibility of application. Most firms likely to be involved in moving an archive will be able to deal with them without additional cost.

2.2.3. Non-paper and sensitive records. Paper records, such as files and letter books, are generally quite sturdy and can be moved with comparative ease. However, there are many other record formats where relocation brings its own challenges.

Plans and drawings held in plan cabinets need to be moved carefully given their bulk. Each drawer should be removed from the cabinet. Note that if the cabinets are old and have been stacked on top of each other, it is quite likely that over time they could have warped so that it may be difficult to replace the drawers.

Doors and lifts (elevators) at both buildings should be checked to ensure they are wide enough to allow a plan drawer to be carried flat. If the drawers have to be tilted sideways a sheet of board should be placed inside the drawer. A third person should

then press gently against the board, as the drawer is turned, to prevent any slippage. During transportation the drawers can be stacked on a pallet in a criss-cross fashion, with a sheet of thick board placed between each drawer for protection. However, the height of the stack should be limited to reduce the risk of damage to the drawers and their contents.

For plans and drawings presently stored in racking, smaller items can be carried in baker's trays. Alternatively, they can be wrapped around a core or cardboard tube, then the bundle should be enclosed in bubble wrap. The tubes should not be stacked too high as the ones on the bottom could be crushed. If the plans are fragile or brittle they should be transported flat, between two sheets of sturdy board, tied to keep them together.

Models and similar bulky items should be moved individually. They need to be handled carefully, as they do not tend to be very sturdy. They should never be stacked on top of each other, even models in cases. While the cases may be made of glass or plastic, they are generally not designed to take the weight of another model on top. If the overall number is small, place them on the back seat or in the boot (trunk) of a car, and transport them that way. If they must be moved in a large vehicle, ensure there is sufficient padding to prevent their movement.

Films and tapes and other records that are held in environmentally controlled storage conditions should be moved quickly. They should be placed within insulated containers, such as polystyrene or foam boxes. Film canisters should be packed flat, whereas computer tapes, videotapes and audio tapes should be placed vertically, on end. The containers should be completely filled and extra packaging materials (eg bubble wrap) should be used if necessary. If the containers are only partially filled, and thus have large amounts of air, they tend to lose optimal environmental conditions very quickly. Extra packaging also prevents unnecessary movement.⁵

Moving computer tapes does pose a risk in that they might pass through a magnetic field with the potential for loss of information. The risk is slight. However, continued proximity to large machines with electric motors, such as generators, should be avoided.

It should be remembered that the key factors in moving films and tapes are good insulation and minimal vibrations. If possible, a refrigerated vehicle or one with air-cushioned suspension should be used. This is especially significant in humid climates. If such a vehicle cannot be obtained, the vehicle should be kept as cool as possible. Load and travel in the coolest part of the day, such as overnight or early morning. Park the vehicle in the shade while loading and unloading. Once loaded, cover the containers with insulating material, such as moving felt. Travel directly to the new building by the quickest, most direct route. If it is necessary to stop for any length of time, keep the vehicle out of the sun. The records should never be stored in a depot overnight.

Glass plate negatives and gramophone recordings should be carefully packaged before they are moved. They should be stored individually in acid-free sleeves, eg polyethylene, polyester or lignin-free non-buffed paper envelopes. A layer of padding should be placed along the bottom of the box and on all sides. Ideally, polyethylene foam should be used, but if this is unavailable then corrugated board or bubble wrap will suffice. Then place each negative or gramophone recording in an upright position, not flat, working from the front to the rear of the box. Items should be separated by smaller pieces of foam or board. They should be packed to the point at which there is virtually no movement in the box. Then another length of padding

should be placed across the top of the box. The padding absorbs shocks and reduces the likelihood of breakage if the boxes are bumped or dropped.⁶

Large volumes should be boxed or wrapped. If they are too big for standard boxes, construct new ones, or wrap them in sturdy paper (not newspaper or coloured paper), or use bubble wrap. Making individual boxes is a time-consuming process so a long lead-time is required. Given their weight, large volumes should generally be packed individually. Multiple volumes in a single box are usually too heavy for a person to lift. Avoid having small volumes in a position where larger ones can crush them. Volumes can be transported either horizontally or vertically. If they are placed horizontally, the stack should not be so high that the higher ones will crush the volumes at the bottom. If they are transported vertically they should be well supported. Volumes should never be stored or transported spine down in a box.

Framed items—such as certificates and photographs—should be placed face down with the glass taped or a piece of board cut to fit within the frame. Items should be separated from each other with a layer of board or packaging material, or packed in bubble wrap. This minimises the chance of breakage and, if it does occur, the glass will fall away from the item.

Photographs and microforms (reference copies) can be transported the same way as paper records. If, however, they are original or master copies they should be treated in the same way as films and tapes.

Classified material should preferably be moved by staff, unless the volume prevents this. Regardless of who actually moves them, the project supervisor should ensure that the vehicle is fully secured and the time taken to move the records should be kept to a minimum. The same applies to *culturally sensitive material* (eg, in Australia, records relating to indigenous populations), which should always be treated with care and respect during a move, regardless of its format.⁷

2.2.4. Cleaning the collection. Depending on the condition of the current building, the collection may need cleaning prior to the move.⁸ If the collection has been housed in good, but cramped, accommodation the boxes and bundles might need a light dusting. However, the need for cleaning becomes more urgent if an organisation has been in sub-standard premises for many years and is moving to a quality air-conditioned building. All traces of dirt and dust must be removed. This not only protects the records: it reduces the risk of contaminating the filtration system in the new building. As the collection is cleaned staff should be especially vigilant for any signs of mould or pest infestation. Affected records should of course be treated prior to the move. If old shelving is being taken to the new building it will need dusting and cleaning after the boxes have been removed. So too will any plan cabinets, racking and furniture.⁹

2.3. Placement of the Collection in the New Building

With the completion of the stocktake and familiarisation with the collection, the next step is to consider in detail how the collection is currently arranged and how it might be located in the new building. The key here is that efficient usage of space and ease of access for staff should be the two determining factors for the way in which the collection is distributed in the new building.

Once the plan that shows how shelving will be laid out in the new building has been finalised, it is then possible to determine precisely where consignments will be

located. Some organisations attempt to replicate their present distribution. However, creating a mirror image of what already exists is very difficult. The shelving layout in the new building will be different, even if old shelving is being relocated. Obviously, the two buildings have different shapes and obstructions, eg columns, doorways and fire aisles. Secondly, if the collection is reboxed prior to the move it will certainly increase in size. Thirdly, there is the flexible nature of shelving itself. For example, in the present building a number of large or odd-shaped volumes may have been stored flat because there was insufficient clearance to store them upright. In the new building there is the opportunity to remedy this, but this in turn will affect the way surrounding records are stored as other shelves will have to be adjusted up or down.

A move provides an organisation with an opportunity to make major changes to the distribution of its collection if it chooses to do so. It can make some straightforward choices by placing highly used records close to the reading room. It can place these records along the bottom rows of the shelving, rather than from top to bottom, to make access easier. Records that deal with similar subjects, eg immigration or defence, could be located closely together.

But there are other options to consider. If there are certain record formats that are presently scattered—plans, drawings and large volumes—they can now be brought together. Conversely, it may be more efficient for consignments of odd-shaped items to be separated into smaller, similar components and housed in various locations. Other consignments that are presently divided can be re-united. Items that are particularly bulky or heavy can be located in one run of specially designed shelving. They should of course be placed on the shelving at waist height or lower, to prevent any injury to staff when accessing them. When placing consignments on a shelving layout be sure to note those consignments that are still active, whereby more transfers are likely in the future, and allow sufficient space for subsequent growth.

2.3.1. Random computerised storage. At this time an organisation might want to consider random computerised storage for its collection. If the collection has been barcoded at the item level it permits an organisation to progress towards random storage and this has advantages. It provides the flexibility of splitting consignments. Boxes can be placed anywhere in the new building, as the computer system will always know where a particular box is stored. If there is a need to house a large consignment at one time it is no longer necessary to find a continuous run of empty shelving. The system will simply indicate where all the available spaces are so that the boxes can be distributed accordingly.

Such a system certainly promotes more efficient use of shelving and helps to ensure there is no wasted space. Yet there is a downside. The apparent benefits of randomly distributing consignments throughout the building have to be weighed against the time and effort taken by staff in retrieving items if, say, access to a whole consignment is sought by a reader.

2.4. Moving the Collection—establishing flow paths

Once the extent of records to be taken to the new building has been resolved, as well as the order in which they are to be taken, the next step is to determine how to get everything out of the current building and into the new one.

At first this may appear a strange comment but it bears careful consideration. The present building may have been occupied for many years. It should not be assumed

that it was easy to locate everything there in the first place. Items such as shelving units, racks or plan cabinets may literally have been built in as part of the original construction. Perhaps the building was later extended, which now makes egress more complicated than it once was.

These issues are not just the responsibility of the removal firm: they are the organisation's responsibility too. In essence, a 'flow path' must be established. A plan must be developed to get the records off the shelves, onto the removal devices (trolleys, cages, etc), out of the storage areas, down the lift or stairs and into the loading dock. From there they have to be loaded onto the removal vehicles and off the premises. Then the same procedure has to be followed in reverse at the new premises. If the current building has above ground (raised) shelving tracks this will make it even more difficult to remove the boxes from the shelving and place them onto the trolleys or cages. The same will apply in the new building.

There are many other issues that need to be considered even before the records leave the storage area. Will tight corners or columns have to be negotiated? Does the building have a lift or hoist, or are there stairs? The reliability of the lift should be verified and, if in any doubt, a thorough inspection and service should be arranged. Are the doors to the storage area, the lift and the stairs all wide enough to accept readily trolleys or cages and can the lift accommodate their weight?

Then it should be ascertained whether the loading dock can house large vehicles under cover and whether records can readily be transferred from the dock into the vehicles. If the dock is exposed to the elements then the records could be damaged. If the dock has a levelling device this will help with the transfer of bulky items, such as plan cabinets. Vehicular access to the loading dock from the street should not be overlooked. If the road is narrow or restricted, this could limit the size of vehicles that could be used. It should be determined whether the road surface inside the property is wide enough to accommodate the manoeuvring of large vehicles and, also, whether it will support laden vehicles weighing many tonnes.

Once the flow path has been developed it is strongly recommended that it be put to the test by relocating some boxes to the new building before the move actually takes place. This way, any weaknesses in the flow path can be identified and remedied.

2.5. Choosing a Removal Firm

If sufficient funds are available it is preferable to engage a removal firm to undertake the bulk of the move. However, it is also desirable to use a firm that specialises in—and has demonstrated experience in—relocating large collections on behalf of archives, libraries, or museums. Simply using a domestic furniture removal firm is not sufficient. It should not be assumed, however, that using professionals abrogates an organisation from any further responsibility. There is much that the project supervisor and other staff will still be required to do.

When seeking quotations from removal firms the tender documentation should emphasise the rare and valuable nature of the collection and the need to ensure that all records are relocated safely and in a predetermined order. The documentation should explain that the organisation's staff will be responsible for co-ordinating the move and the removal firm's staff will undertake the loading and unloading of vehicles under direct supervision.

The essential items to include in the tender documentation are:

- the approximate quantity of records (in metres, boxes or bundles) to be moved;
- different types of record formats and their special needs, eg plans, models, films, glass plate negatives, seals and parchment;
- the need for refrigerated vehicles or vehicles with air-cushioned suspension, particularly if audio-visual or fragile materials are being moved;
- the required time frame for the move—and whether it will take place outside normal business hours;
- the addresses of the current and new buildings;
- all known restrictions—eg restricted lift access, narrow driveways—at both buildings.

Each company should be asked to indicate what level of insurance it has, as cover against damage to both records and buildings; whether its staff are trained in the handling of fragile archival material; and whether they have undergone any form of security clearance or police check. The documentation should stipulate that any firm tendering for the work should visit both the old and the new premises and thoroughly familiarise themselves with the two locations.

As part of their quotation, all firms should describe the methodology they will use for the move. At that time they should be asked a range of questions, such as:

- What type of equipment—trolleys, cages or pallets—will be involved?
- Is this equipment simply designed for domestic use, or is it designed to move archival collections? Will it ensure that all items are protected and kept in original order?
- Will boxes be placed on individual shelves within the trolleys or cages or simply be stacked on top of each other. If the latter applies, how will the boxes be protected?
- Does the firm number the cages or trolleys for ease of control?
- How will the firm keep the records secure from unauthorised access during the move?
- Can items be retrieved during the move should the need arise?
- What measures will the firm use to protect each building from damage? Generally, it should use coverings to protect the floors, columns and lift walls. It is a small point, but ask what kind of wheels they use on their trolleys or cages. Large, polyurethane wheels are best, particularly those over 125 mm (5 inches) in diameter. Large wheels prevent the trolleys from being caught in below ground (sunken) shelving tracks or similar obstructions; polyurethane wheels lessen the risk of damage to floors.
- How many vehicles and people will be used, and are drivers issued with mobile phones or two-way radios?

Many removal firms use specially designed trolleys or cages with built-in shelves that are wide enough to accommodate directly all boxes from a standard shelf 900 mm (3 feet) wide. So, the boxes come straight from the shelving to shelves in the trolley or cage. The advantages of this method are that it helps maintain the original order and prevents the boxes from being crushed.

As part of the selection process each removal firm should be asked for references and they should be carefully checked. A firm should not be chosen simply because it provides the cheapest quotation. The firm that provides the best methodology for efficiently relocating the collection and protecting it at the same time is the one that should be selected. Otherwise what is saved now will be paid for later.

Lastly, even if an experienced removal firm is being used, sufficient time should be allowed (up to one day) to train its staff in the handling of archival materials—the need to handle all materials carefully and to keep them in order.

3. The move

3.1. Final Preparations

As the time for the move approaches there are several matters that the project supervisor needs to consider beforehand.

It is imperative that access to the goods lift (freight elevator) and the loading dock—at both buildings—will be guaranteed at the times it is. The same applies to parking for the removal firm's vehicles. The building managers at both buildings should be consulted to ensure that no one else is moving at the same time and that no large deliveries are expected, so that there will be no competition for the lift, loading dock or parking. The removal firm should have protective coverings in place for the walls, floors, columns and lifts at both the old and new buildings. Of course this is unnecessary at the old building if it is to be demolished once the records have been removed.

Note that during the loading and unloading phases valuable assets will be at risk and so particular attention must be paid to security. This applies not only to the record collection but also to portable items such as laptop computers, cameras and mobile phones. If the offices are exposed to street access, they should be closely guarded to prevent theft.

If existing shelving is to be relocated and reassembled, then a staged withdrawal needs to be implemented. Basically, a methodology must be developed in which some records are removed from the shelving and stored elsewhere, and then the shelving is transported and reassembled, with the records following. It is a complicated process and needs careful planning so that the records in storage are protected and there is always sufficient empty shelving at the new building to accommodate the next delivery. However, if the new building is already shelved then, in comparison, the move should be simpler.

It is a minor point, but during the move, for the comfort of all, be sure to have the air-conditioning or heating switched on at both premises.

3.2. Controlling the Move

This is certainly the most difficult period and where careful planning will ensure the process goes smoothly. There needs to be at least two staff members co-ordinating the move—one at each building. Each person should have a mobile phone or two-way radio.

By now the order in which all records, staff and furniture will be relocated should be finalised. Having completed the stocktake there should be a printout of all consignments—their number, location, additional locations if part of a consignment is stored elsewhere, and record format, as well as box types and quantities. The list should record any discrepancies, eg two boxes with the same number, boxes numbered out of sequence, missing boxes, or irregularly shaped boxes located elsewhere. Copies of the list should be held by persons at both buildings and by the removal firm.

It should be remembered that the removal firm is under the direction of the project supervisor, or a staff member nominated by the supervisor. That person's role is to guide removal staff throughout the storage areas, and ensure that consignments match the printout, consignments with multiple locations are joined together, trolleys are numbered correctly and any other discrepancies noted.

As each consignment is removed from the shelving the printout should be marked. As each trolley is filled the trolley number should also be noted. The trolleys should then be taken directly to the vehicles. As each vehicle is filled a note should be prepared which indicates the final number of trolleys, their total range of boxes and the vehicle registration number. Any discrepancies, eg missing boxes, should also be noted. This information should be emailed or faxed to the staff member at the new building. Vehicles should be secured prior to leaving the building, especially if they are carrying classified material. Depending on how many vehicles are involved, arrival and departure times should be staggered. This helps reduce congestion, particularly at the receiving point. It is generally not necessary for staff to accompany the vehicles provided they are fully secured.

The receiving end should maintain two copies of the printout and duplicate the above actions in reverse. The second copy of the printout is used to record new locations and quantities and the data can then be keyed into the control system as each run of shelving is filled. At the conclusion of each day a comparison should be made of the lists located at both buildings. If necessary, another printout can be obtained from the control system to verify the accuracy of data entry against the original printout.

It should be remembered that vehicles and lifts can, and often will, break down. Timetables may need to be adjusted rapidly to take this into account.

4. After the event

When the move is finished the most important task is to get everything and everyone back to normal as quickly as possible. The role of the project supervisor at this time is to be visible while all of this is taking place. The supervisor should make regular walks through the office, public and storage areas. The person needs to be seen and to be available for consultation. While this may mean listening to abuse if something has gone wrong, the supervisor needs to see that the move has gone according to plan and that, where it did not, remedial action is being taken.

The record collection should be back on the shelves. Action should be taken to resolve any anomalies that were uncovered during the move, eg missing boxes or damaged records. The collection should once again be accessible and readers should be notified that it is available. This is especially important if delays were encountered during the move.

Housekeeping matters will need to be addressed. All accounts should be finalised. Both the old and new buildings should be inspected for any damage before the final payment is made to the removal firm. All empty cartons should be removed as quickly as possible, as should packaging material and any other mess. Such material detracts from the appearance of the new building and just gets in the way. If the previous building was leased, and the lease is to be surrendered, the organisation may have to 'make good' which simply means restoring the premises to the condition they were in before they were occupied. Making good often involves tortuous negotiations

with the building owner concerning the extent of liability. Sufficient time should be allowed for this, as should the funds to ensure that it is done satisfactorily.¹⁰

Once the new building has been occupied for a while, some time should be allowed to evaluate the premises and the interaction between the collection, staff, readers and other clients. Despite careful planning beforehand, it may have become apparent that certain things have not worked as well as first thought and changes may be needed. What may be required is a post-occupancy evaluation of the premises, an exercise that enables the project supervisor and other staff to consider how the building compares to what was originally intended and encourages them to participate in future changes if they are required.¹¹

5. Conclusion

Long-term planning, attention to detail and good communications before, during and after relocation are everything. They represent the essential difference between a successful move and a disaster. All details should be checked, confirmed and then confirmed again. The principal function of the project supervisor is to ensure that everyone who needs to know what is happening, does in fact know. When it is all over, the supervisor should be prepared to share his or her experiences, both good and bad. This can be achieved by writing an article for one of the many journals that are available, or giving a paper at a conference. It adds to the overall level of knowledge and might help the next person who is organising a move.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The project supervisor can be appointed from outside the organisation, if the budget will allow it, but in this paper it is assumed that the person is a member of staff.
2. All readers should be informed—well in advance—of the intended relocation timeframe and the new contact details. To prepare readers and help reduce demand during the move, notices should be placed in the reading room and on the website, if available. Advertisements should be placed in local newspapers and the journals of key research groups, eg genealogical and historical societies. If there are readers who regularly travel long distances to use the collection, it would be wise to contact them individually.
3. If boxing the collection is beyond an organisation's resources, an alternative is shrink wrapping, using archival quality plastics. See Janice Stagnitto, 'The shrink wrap project at Rutgers University Special Collections and Archives', *Abbey Newsletter*, vol 18, nos 4–5 (August–September 1994), pp 56–59. If archival quality plastics are considered too expensive then bubble wrap or paper, but not newspaper or coloured paper, should be used.
4. The codes referred to provide the technical basis for the EAN (European Article Numbering Code), also known in the United States as the UPC (Universal Product Code).
5. Further information on moving films and tapes will be found in Henning Schou, *Preservation of Moving Images and Sound* (Brussels, 1989), pp 61–63. Should stocks of cellulose nitrate film need to be

- moved, be aware that in some countries it is classified as a dangerous material and must be packaged and transported in accordance with national, state or local regulations.
6. See also Sarah S. Wagner, 'Approaches to moving glass plate negatives', *Topics in Photographic Preservation*, vol 6 (1995), pp 130–133.
 7. Remember that guidance can always be sought for any items for which there is doubt. A good source of information is the Conservation Online website < <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/> > .
 8. See also Michele V. Cloonan, 'Cleaning the Newberry's collections', *Abbey Newsletter*, vol 6, no 4 (August 1982), pp 53–54.
 9. In this context it is assumed that the new building has been scrupulously cleaned and given time to acclimatise before the move actually takes place.
 10. See also Ted Ling, 'Making good: the process of restoring leased archives premises', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol 28, no 1 (May 2000), pp 80–85.
 11. See also Chris Watson and Helen McNaught, 'The best bit is when you come in and they have just made the coffee: the post-occupancy evaluation of the National Archives Building', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol 26, no 1 (May 1998), pp 46–57.

FURTHER READING

- Simon Cane, 'Moving tales: the transfer of collections held by the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester to a new storage facility', *Conservation Administration News*, no 68 (March 1999), pp 36–39.
- Anne Cooke, 'Have archives box will travel', *Practical Archivist*, vol 4, no 3 (1995), pp 1–2.
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- Rhys Griffith and C. K. Kirton, 'Capital transfer: moving the Greater London Council archive', *JSA*, vol 15 (1994), pp 51–57.
- Susan L. King, 'Moving the City of Charleston's Archives and Records Center', *Records Management Quarterly*, vol 27, no 4 (October 1993), pp 32–35.
- Peter Pavel Klasinc, 'Archives on the move', *Atlanti*, 4 (1994), pp 113–117.
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- Roberta Pilette, 'Moving Archives: 10th Annual Preservation Conference, National Archives and Records Administration', *Conservation Administration News*, no 61 (April 1995), pp 21–22.
- Marianna S. Wells and Rosemary Young, *Moving and Reorganizing a Library* (Guildford, 1997).
- Kris A. White and Glenn S. Cook, 'Round 'em up, move 'em out: how to move and preserve archive materials', *Conservation Administration News*, no 57 (April 1994), pp 16–17.
- In addition to the above sources, reference was also made to contributions to the Archives and Archivists listserv < archives@listserv.muohio.edu > posted between 1994 and 1998 by James Cross, Dean Debolt, Edwin Frank, Steve Masar, Chas Mutschler and Geri Solomon.

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